

He first came to the Hill to work for TOM HARKIN. He joined Senator CONRAD's staff as agriculture advisor in 1987, the year Senator CONRAD came to the Senate. He later went on to serve as Senator CONRAD's legislative director and eventually as his chief of staff.

One of Kent's great passions was the federal budget. He believed America's budget should be balanced not only economically, but morally as well.

So he fought for budgets that would enable working families to share in these good economic times, budgets that would extend the benefits of this economy beyond Wall Street, to Main Street. He fought for budgets that would allow working parents to take their children to a doctor when they're sick, budgets that would enable parents to find good, affordable day care, budgets that would allow parents to send their children to good schools—and after that, to send them on to college.

Kent had a special place in his heart for people who live close to the land—farmers and ranchers and the people who grow up in the small towns of rural America.

He grew up in one of those towns: a little farm town in Iowa—population about 600. And though he left that town long ago, he still kept it close to his heart.

Farmers and people in farm towns all over America have lost a good friend, and an extraordinary advocate. We are grateful for Kent's diligent work on: disaster relief and farm-crisis relief.

And we extend our deepest sympathy to Kent's wife, Michelle, who works for Senator HARKIN and to their two small children, 4-year-old Caitlin—"Caiti"—and 2-year-old Austin, both of whom he loved even more than he loved this place.

We also offer our condolences to Kent's father, Ken, and his mother, Evelyn; his brothers, Mel and Michael; his sister Cheri; and his many nieces and nephews. Our thoughts and prayers are with them, and with all the members of the Conrad and Harkin staffs, who are feeling this loss more deeply than probably any member of the "Capitol family."

Like Detective Gibson and Officer Chestnut, Kent Hall died too young. He was only 52 years old. But his legacy will live on—in his two little children and in the ideals he believed in so passionately, and fought for so hard, and helped transform into law.

We will miss him.

THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURE CRISIS

Mr. DASCHLE. Madam President, in July, less than a month and a half ago, the Senate voted unanimously on a resolution to declare there is a national crisis in agriculture, that we needed to take immediate action to address it.

Following the unanimous passage of that resolution, we passed several amendments to the agricultural appro-

priations bill designed to address the problem. We passed an amendment to require mandatory price reporting for livestock. We passed a second amendment offered by the distinguished Senator from South Dakota, Senator JOHNSON, requiring the labeling of imported meat. And we passed an amendment offered by the two hard-working Senators from North Dakota to require at least a \$500 million indemnity program for victims of multiple-year disasters.

Unfortunately, we failed to pass my amendment to lift the cap on marketing loans and extend their term by 6 months—which is probably the single most effective way to address the problem of low prices and lost income among grain farmers.

Since we considered those amendments, the farm crisis has deepened very seriously. Over the past 3 weeks, as I visited with farmers and ranchers and rural businesspeople from all over South Dakota, they told me the same story. Many of them simply will not survive the coming months unless circumstances change. Unless we can bring about a better farm economy, a more stable price in most of the commodities now being grown, we will see an attrition in agriculture the likes of which we have not seen in over a decade.

Nick Nemec, a young farmer from Holabird, SD, who testified at a hearing on July 29 on the agricultural crisis, said that when prices go down, his family's everyday expenses go up proportionately. He said, "If the Consumer Price Index was up 40% in one year, there would be riots in the streets of cities all across America. Out in farm country, we just have farm auctions."

I heard that same sentiment over and over again when I was home these past few weeks. We have already seen too many auctions. Our farmers and ranchers are very concerned, frankly, about their survival.

So the circumstances, Madam President, as I report to the Senate this afternoon, are, unfortunately, in worse shape and more precarious than they were just a month and a half ago when these amendments were offered. We must find ways to address the current crisis in American agriculture.

So I put the Senate on notice this afternoon that we will again be offering our amendment to increase the loan rate, to establish some kind of a floor in agricultural grain prices, just as we have on minimum wage across this country now for generations. We need a minimum price, because if we do not have that, all of those stories and all of those concerns can only worsen. The farm auctions will become more frequent.

So I hope we can find, in as bipartisan a fashion as is humanly possible this close to an election, legislation we can all agree upon that will allow us to address the price more effectively, that will allow us to deal with the issues we began to confront in July.

We must pass and sign into law the mandatory price reporting legislation that passed in the Senate. We must pass and sign into law the labeling legislation that was passed in the Senate. We certainly must pass this indemnity legislation and sign that into law as quickly as we can.

What is missing is what will help the grain farmers. And unless we pass that minimum floor, that increase in the loan rate, there is nothing out there that can help the grain farmers to survive what is the worst disaster they have experienced in now more than 15 years.

So, Madam President, as we begin to consider what the agenda ought to be as we come back from a month in our States, I hope everyone understands and appreciates and empathizes with the circumstances confronting America's farmers. I hope that empathy will lead to a consensus about increasing the loan rate and providing the kinds of opportunities to farmers that they failed to achieve when we debated this matter just over a month ago.

THE REMAINING SENATE AGENDA

Mr. DASCHLE. Madam President, we have 6 weeks remaining in the Congress. Those 6 weeks will define our efforts as a Congress. And this is the last matter that I wish to raise before our colleagues this afternoon—the agenda for those remaining 6 weeks.

Time is short. Distractions are many. Needless to say, we must focus on our priorities. Our success for the entire Congress will really depend on what we achieve in the next 6 weeks. It will depend on whether we are committed to accomplishing the people's business.

What is the people's business? I think everyone understands what it is. The people's business is the business that we have before us. Appropriations bills must be completed.

The Congress' first responsibility is to ensure stable Government operations. There must not be talk of a Government shutdown. I have heard some of our Republican leaders, especially on the other side, suggest that the President may shut the Government down.

Today is the last day in August. The budget resolution was due in April. So far, neither body has delivered a budget resolution. So I call upon the Republican leadership in the House and in the Senate to do what the law requires, to do what is so essential to restore confidence, to do what really is required to set the framework for the priorities and the commitments that we must make in these next 6 weeks. I call on the Republican leadership to pass a budget resolution.

Not one single appropriations bill has gone to the President. Republican poison pills appear throughout the appropriations bills. So if there is a danger of a shutdown, we all know where it originates. But it is incumbent upon